

THE STATE OF PARTICIPATION RESEARCH IN BEHAVIORAL POLITICAL SCIENCE: HOW CITIZEN PARTICIPATION HAS BEEN UNDERSTOOD?

สถานะของการศึกษาเรื่องการมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมืองในวิชาพฤติกรรมการเมือง:
นักรัฐศาสตร์สาขาพฤติกรรมการเมืองเข้าใจการมีส่วนร่วมของพลเมืองแค่ไหน?

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ABSTRACT

It is almost half a century that research findings on political participation based on empirical field studies have been fast accumulating, but several questions still has repeatedly asked and answered by numbers of behavioral political science scholars. This paper describes how scholars in this field conceptualize political participation. This paper also discusses political participation and other related topic literature by dividing them into three groups of factors (personal, structural, and cultural factors) that could affect citizens' participation. The major attempt is to learn about what scholars understand and how they explain about how and why citizens get involved in politics. This paper finds that behavioral political science scholars have used several words or terms in order to explain about citizen's involvement in politics. Those words or terms also have been conceptualized by including either (both) several conventional forms of participation such as voting and participating in campaign activities, contacting public officials, working with others to solve community problems, and so on or (and) unconventional participation such as protest, demonstration, political violence, and access politics through new technologies (e.g. mobile phone and the Internet). Reviewing number of literature in political behavior field of study, this paper argues that scholars in this field have adequate knowledge about political participation although there are some rooms to think and rethink about what should be done to make the field progress.

KEYWORDS : Political participation, Political participation research, Citizen's participation

บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้นำเสนอพัฒนาการของการศึกษาวิจัยเรื่องการมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมืองในวิชารัฐศาสตร์ โดยการรวบรวมผลการศึกษาวิจัยสำคัญๆ ที่มีการค้นพบโดยนักรัฐศาสตร์สาขาพฤติกรรมการเมืองตั้งแต่อดีตจนถึงปัจจุบันมาอภิปราย เพื่อประเมินสถานะของการศึกษาวิจัยเกี่ยวกับการมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมืองในรอบ 50 ปีที่ผ่านมาว่า นักรัฐศาสตร์มีความรู้ความเข้าใจเกี่ยวกับพฤติกรรมการมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมืองอย่างไร องค์ความรู้ในเรื่องดังกล่าวเพียงพอหรือไม่ และมีประเด็นท้าทายอะไรบ้างที่การศึกษาวิจัยในอนาคตจะต้องให้ความสำคัญมากยิ่งขึ้นเพื่อทำให้งานวิจัยในเรื่องการมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมืองมีการพัฒนาก้าวหน้าต่อไป ผลการศึกษา พบว่านักรัฐศาสตร์สาขาพฤติกรรมการเมืองมีการใช้คำหรือกลุ่มคำที่หลากหลายในการอธิบายถึงพฤติกรรมการมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมืองของพลเมือง และการนิยามคำศัพท์เหล่านี้ก็มีความแตกต่างกันไปตามวัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัยแต่ละชิ้น เช่น งานวิจัยบางชิ้นศึกษาการมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมืองในความหมายแคบครอบคลุมเฉพาะการมีส่วนร่วมโดยการไปลงคะแนนเลือกตั้งและโดยการเข้าร่วมกิจกรรมที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการเลือกตั้ง ในขณะที่บางชิ้นศึกษาในความหมายที่กว้างโดยการพิจารณากิจกรรมอื่นๆ ด้วย อาทิ การติดต่อกับเจ้าหน้าที่รัฐ การแสดงความคิดเห็นผ่านสื่อสารมวลชนหรือทางอินเทอร์เน็ต การเดินขบวนเรียกร้อง การประท้วง และการใช้ความรุนแรงทางการเมือง เป็นต้น ยิ่งไปกว่านั้น นักรัฐศาสตร์สาขาพฤติกรรมการเมืองยังได้พัฒนาทฤษฎีและตัวแบบต่างๆ เพื่ออธิบายปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อพฤติกรรมการมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมือง ซึ่งอาจแบ่งออกเป็น 3 กลุ่มปัจจัยใหญ่ๆ ได้แก่ ปัจจัยส่วนบุคคล ปัจจัยเชิงสถาบัน และปัจจัยทางวัฒนธรรม จนอาจกล่าวได้ว่าองค์ความรู้ในเรื่องการมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมืองที่มีการพัฒนาอย่างต่อเนื่องโดยนักรัฐศาสตร์สาขานี้มีมากเพียงพอต่อการอธิบายและทำความเข้าใจพฤติกรรมการมีส่วนร่วมของพลเมือง อย่างไรก็ตาม บทความนี้เห็นว่ายังมีอีกหลายประเด็นคำถามเกี่ยวกับการมีส่วนร่วมของพลเมืองที่น่าจะมีการหยิบยกขึ้นมาทำการศึกษามากขึ้นในอนาคต โดยเฉพาะในประเด็นผลลัพธ์และทิศทางของการมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมืองที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการเสริมสร้างความเข้มแข็งและยั่งยืนของระบอบประชาธิปไตย

คำสำคัญ : การมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมือง การศึกษาวิจัยเกี่ยวกับการมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมือง การมีส่วนร่วมของพลเมือง

Introduction

Political participation is at the heart of democracy. As many scholars have mentioned, democracy is unthinkable without the ability of citizens to participate freely in the governing process (Dahl 1971; 1989; Verba, Brady, and Scholzman, 1995; Macedo et al. 2005; Dalton 2006). Yet, not all citizens have participated in politics. In fact, while many citizens are active: they vote or engage in more demanding forms of participation, others are not.

This paper begins with a very classic question of political participation, "How and why do people get involved in politics?" This question was raised and responded to by Lester Milbrath (1965) in his first edition of *Political Participation*, the first empirical study of political

participation (Kaase, 2007) that was published in 1965. Since then, it is almost half a century that research findings on political participation based on empirical field studies have been fast accumulating, but the question still has repeatedly asked and answered by numbers of behavioral political science scholars. Why is this question important, particularly for behavioral political science scholars? More specifically, how do behavioral political science scholars understand about how and why people get involved in politics? This paper would argue that we should explore a historical development of studies in political participation field and bring as many as most important existing studies to be discussed both in terms of each conceptualization and explanation.

Drawing on a rich set of research traditions, this paper examines a conceptualization of political participation. This paper describes how behavioral scholars conceptualize political participation, how and why it has changed over the years, and what conceptual framework has been applied by recent research. Moreover, in order to learn about what scholars understand and how they explain about how and why citizens get involved in politics, this paper discusses political participation and other related topic literature by dividing them into three groups of factors: personal, structural, and cultural factors. As a political scientist, these discussions might broaden our understanding of political participation and encourage us to think and rethink about the future research that may be needed to make the field progress. In the concluding section, this paper therefore expands the discussion to consider the challenges for the future research agenda in political participation field.

Conceptualization of Political Participation

In the early years of behavioral political science (see e.g. Merriam and Gosnell, 1924; Boechel 1928; Tingsten, 1937), political participation was defined in most studies as simply voting turnout. As studies became more sophisticated, the operational definition of political participation then was broadened to include other electoral activities such as campaigning, attending political meeting, giving money to a candidate or a party, running for an office, and so on. Influenced by studies in the 1970s, particularly those of Sidney Verba and his colleagues (1971; 1978), several studies on political participation tend to added non-electoral activities, for instance, involving in community activities, contacting officials, protesting, and communicating with others into their conceptual framework as well. Recently, political participation is conceptualized either in broad or narrow

sense depending on what scholars seek to explain and what kind of data is available for their analysis.

From “Levels” to “Modes” of Participation

In the classic work of Milbrath (1965), political participation was viewed narrowly as behavioral acts investigated belong solely to electoral politics. Milbrath divided patterns and procedures of political participation into 14 levels based on the intensity of the participation level, starting from the most fundamental form of participation (that is most often engaged) to the more advanced ones (that are respectively less often engaged). These activities include: (1) exposing oneself to political *stimuli*; (2) using the right to vote; (3) initiating political issues into group discussion; (4) attempt to persuade others to vote in the direction that one finds appropriate; (5) joining in political public relations activities, such as wearing promotional clothes or putting campaign stickers on the car; (6) having contact with government officials or political leaders; (7) donation of money or materials to support political parties or candidates; (8) joining in or listening to the electoral campaign or political assembly; (9) working for candidates or political parties in the electoral campaign; (10) being member and participating in political parties' activities; (11) joining in the meeting of political parties to elect representatives or to determine policy strategies; (12) conducting activities to raise fund for political parties; (13) being electoral candidates on behalf of political parties, and; (14) holding political positions and overseeing the operation of a political party, which is the highest level of activities.

Although this conceptualization of political participation includes most, but not all, common activities that characterize the normal process of a democracy, it was modified by the new notion that views political participation as multi-dimensional, focusing on “modes”

or “styles” rather than level of political participation. The modes of participation were first reported in a cross-national comparative study of political participation under the supervision of Sidney Verba and Norman Nie (e.g. Verba, Nie, and Kim, 1971). This conceptualization includes both behavior acts in electoral politics — voting, party and campaign activities that Milbrath presented and other forms of non-electoral involvements including community activists, protestors, and communicators. Verba and Nie also argue that people do not use these activities interchangeably, as many early analysis assumed. Instead, people tend to specialize in activities that match their motivations and goals.

Defining Participation in Recent Studies

In recent studies, there are many words or terms scholars have used, either in specific or broad senses, to explain about people’s involvement in politics. Those words (or terms) are, for example, political participation, civic engagement, political engagement, and so on. Sidney Verba, Henry Brady, and Kay Lehman Schlozman (1995) summarize previous theories of participation in terms of what they term the “civic voluntarism model.” By political participation the authors refer simply to activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action — either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies. By voluntary activity the authors mean participation that is not obligatory — no one is forced to volunteer — and that receives no pay or only token financial compensation.

Another example is Pippa Norris (2002). Norris uses the term “political activism,” and applies this term to include participation through elections, parties, and civic activities. To analyze and explain the variations in levels of electoral turnout, party membership, and civic activism

in countries around the world today, Norris develops the core model combining five factors that can help explain patterns of participation: (1) the *level of societal modernization* in each country; (2) the *structure of the state* (e.g. electoral laws, party system, and constitutional structures); (3) the *role of mobilizing agencies* (e.g. unions, churches, parties, movement, and media), (4) the *resources* that individuals bring to the process, and (5) the *motivation* that draw citizens into civic affairs.

Like Norris, Stephen Macedo et al. (2005) define civic engagement in a broad sense and do not distinguish it sharply from the term, political participation. That is, for them, “civic engagement includes any activity, individual or collective, devoted to influencing the collective life of the polity” (p.6). It includes the acquisition of relevant knowledge, skills, and wide range of acts in both electoral and non-electoral (civic) activities. Cliff Zukin et al. (2006), on the other hand, try to distinguish among four dimensions of political participation: *civic engagement*, participation aimed at to achieve public goods through direct hand-on work in cooperation with other; *political engagement*, participation in political activity aimed at influencing government policy or affecting the selection of public officials; *public voice*, the ways citizens give expression to their views on public issues; and *cognitive engagement*, participation by paying attention to politics and public affairs.

The Importance of Political Participation

Whether using in broad or specific purposes, for most scholars, people’s involvement in politics is important and necessary for democratic polity. An active public participation is required because it is through discussions, popular interest, and involvement in politics that societal goals should be defined and carried out (Dalton, 2006). For this reason, there are at least three main reasons why

political participation is essential for democracy (Macedo et al., 2005). First, political participation strengthens the quality of governance. Public policies would be improved, more legitimate and more effective, if citizens provide sufficient information, resources, time, and space to deliberation in the policy processes. Second, political participation provides the government with more legitimacy. That is, the government can become the government for the people, when citizens can equally participate in their own self-rule, in which their interests can be existed and realized. Finally, political participation can enhance the quality of citizens' lives. In this respect, political and civic activity is valuable in itself. It can provide a wide variety of goods and services that neither the state nor the market can replace. In addition, citizens might gain greater satisfaction when participate actively in groups or social networks. Because political participation is important for democratic processes, scholars in the past decades have paid close attention to this topic and seek in particular to explain factors that affect people's participation.

Citizen Involvement Explanations: Factors Influence Political Participation

Research on factors that may affect people's political participation has been widely conducted by political scientists. There are at least three groups of factors that scholars have examined and used to explain political participation: (1) personal; (2) structural; and (3) cultural factors.

1. Personal Factors

Personal factors, those that reflect the characteristics of individuals, include political knowledge, political interest, partisanship, socioeconomic status, and group-based inequalities in participation (Macedo et al.,

2005). According to political behavior research, these factors correlate with political participation in several ways.

1.1 Political Knowledge

Many studies indicate the link between political knowledge and political participation. That is, people who know more about politics are more actively engaged in it (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Popkin and Dimock, 1999; Milner, 2002). Political knowledge also enhances citizens' civic capacities — the ability of individuals to see the connections between public policy and their own interests as well as ability to make their voting decisions based on sophisticated criteria such as a candidate's positions on issues (Kahn and Kenny, 1999; and Bartels, 1996). Michael X. Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter (1996) examine Americans' political knowledge, what they know — and don't know — about politics and why it matters, and find that many American citizens are remarkably informed about the details of politics. However, the greatest concern, according to their findings, is that there is an unequal knowledge-distribution among people based on who have differences in social and economic status. That is, whites, men, and older, financially secure citizens have substantially more knowledge about national politics than do blacks, women, young adults, and financially less well-off citizens. For this reason, citizens who are most socially and economically disadvantaged are least able to redress their grievances politically.

1.2 Political Interest

Political interest, the degree to which politics arouses a citizen's curiosity, is also important as an explanation of political participation (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995; Miller and Rahn, 2002). Political interest could be a result of long-term (e.g. pre-adult learning and experiences in political events and economic circumstance) and/or contemporary stimulus (e.g. current

social context and political campaign). Socialization approaches suggest that pre-adult political learning affects future adult political participation by arousing individuals' interest to get (don't get) involved in politics. For instance, Paul Allen Beck and M. Kent Jennings (1982) develop four causal models of pathways to political participation — parent socioeconomic status, parent political activity, parent civic orientation, and high-school activity involvement models, and argue that each pathway have an impact on adult participation, with parent socioeconomic status and high school activism having the strongest effect. Moreover, in an exhaustive model of campaign participation in the 2000 election, Joanne Miller and Wendy Rahn (2002) find that interest in campaign is a powerful antecedent of vote turnout, second only to habit (that is, previous turnout).

1.3 Political Partisanship

Studies on the impact of political partisanship show that the people who are most likely to turn out to vote and to participate in other forms of campaign activity are those people who identify with a political party, while those who do not so identify are less likely to vote and otherwise engage in the electoral process (see e.g. Bartels, 2000). Aiming to explain why vote turnout decline in the United States, Paul Abramson and John Aldrich (1982) analyze the eight presidential election survey conducted between 1952 and 1980 by the Survey Research Center and the Center of Political Studies of the University of Michigan and the six off-year congressional surveys conducted between 1958 and 1978. They argue that party identification is one of two most critical factors (another is belief about government responsiveness) that may help explain why the turnout has declined in presidential elections since 1960 and in off-year congressional elections since 1966.

1.4 Socioeconomic Status

Several decades of empirical research have established socioeconomic status as a major determinant of political participation. Differences in political resources, such as educational level, income, and employment patterns, explain a large part of this gap. Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and Henry E. Brady (1999), for example, claim that recent trends in American politics have significant consequences for the nature of political activity and the extent of participatory in equalities. That is, people with lower income are less likely to participate in all kinds of political activities (i.e. voting, campaign work, campaign contributions, contacting officials, protest, informal community activity, broad membership, and affiliated with political organization). In addition, while people with higher income are more generous in their financial contributions, they dedicate less amount of time in political campaigns than those with lower income did. Thus, it is not socioeconomic status, per se, that stimulates participation, but socioeconomic status as it relates to skills and orientations that directly influence participation (Dalton, 2006: 50).

Whether or not increasing economic inequality causes a decline in political interest and participation is controversial. For instance, Henry Brady (2004) argues that rising income inequality over time does not appear to be responsible for the drop in other forms of political participation. However, he then finds evidence, in the same study, that income inequality across states *is* a factor explaining why some states have higher levels of participation than others.

However, while the positive association between socioeconomic status and political participation seems to obtain across western democracies, many researchers have made clear that voter abstention in nondemocratic (or less-democratic or young democratic) systems may have a very different meaning and, thus, very different

demographic contours. For example, Brady and Kaplan (2001) find no relationship between education and voting in Estonia during the 1980s and argue that the act of voting during the Soviet era in Estonia was not about political choice and representation, but a ritual in which the better educated may have chosen to abstain. In addition, seeking to explain why the urban voters vote less than rural voters in South Korea, C.I. Eugene Kim, Young-Whan Kihl, and Dooek-Kyou Chung (1973) argue that the low turnout rate of the urban voters, apart from male and female differences, is due to the low turnout rate of those who are young and those who are highly educated.

1.5 Group-based Inequalities

Many studies conclude that members of some demographic groups may participate more, on average, than others: women are more likely to know female politicians than male ones and may be more likely to try to persuade others how to vote when there is a woman on the ballot (Hansen, 1997; Campbell and Wolbrecht, 2004); African Americans report voting at moderately lower levels and are less likely to contact a political official or to be affiliated with a political organization than White Americans, but they are more likely than whites to report doing campaign work and participating in protest (Verba, Scholzman, and Brady, 1995); and factors such as English proficiency, foreign-born status, and political socialization account for much of the lower participation of Asian Americans (Citrin and Highton, 2002; Leighley and Vedlitz, 2006; Lien, 1999).

2. Structural Factors

Structural factors, those that reflect the characteristics of political system and institutions, include media environment and contextual conditions of electoral politics such as political campaigns, political competition, political mobilization, and obstacles to enfranchisement

(Macedo et al., 2005). These factors can influence the political choices citizens make in various ways.

2.1 Media Environment

Many studies accept that the media play a critical role in the electoral process by providing an essential component of meaningful civic engagement such as a communication between candidates and voters, news and information about the election, and channels that allow individuals not only to express their opinions but also to create their own personalized versions of the news through website and blogs (Iyengar, Peters, and Kinder, 1982; Ansolabehere et al., 1994; Miller and Krosnick, 2000). Pippa Norris (1996) examines the association between TV use and political participation, and claims that news and public affair programming may actually prove beneficial to the health society. According to her findings, when paying attention to the contents of what people are watching, Norris finds that people who regularly watch the network news were significantly more likely to be involved in all types of political activity: voting; campaign work, campaign contributions; contacting officials; protesting; being a member of voluntary organizations; and working informally with others to solve community problems.

In addition to a positive effect of the formal forms of mass media information, soft news consumption may help link people to engage more in the politics. Matthew A. Baum (2002) conducts a series of statistical investigations examining the relationship between individual media consumption and attentiveness to several high-profile foreign policy crisis issues (e.g. Gulf War, Kosovo, NAFTA, and so fourth). He argues that the soft news media have successfully piggybacked information about foreign crises to entertainment-oriented information. Soft news consumers thereby gain information about such issues as an incidental by-product of seeking entertainment. For this reason, even though the soft news media may

not necessarily cover political issues in the same way that traditional news programs do, we might expect that some of barriers to information and political participation confronting democratic citizens may be falling due to selective political coverage by this entertainment-oriented.

Since media has several benefits, especially in attracting people to be interested in politics, an inappropriate use of information distribution, in contrast, might cause a negative impact on political participation. Stephen Ansolabehere, Shanto Iyengar, Adam Simon, and Nicholas Valentino (1994) develop experimental research to examine the effects of negative campaign advertising on turnout, and find that negative advertisements drop intention to vote by 5 percent. Voters who watch negative advertisements become lacking confidence in the responsiveness of electoral institutions and public officials. As campaign become more negative and cynical, citizens' intentions to vote thus decline.

2.2 Electoral Context

Recent studies trend to emphasize (or deemphasize) political participation more on the contextual factors observed through political campaigns, political competition, or political mobilization. For example, Rosenstone and Hanson (2003) revived attention in the role of parties and interest groups, and indicated an important role of party workers in activating voters through local campaigns. Verba and his colleagues (1995) also acknowledged the impact of mobilizing agencies such as trade unions and churches in mobilizing working-class communities.

Well-designed electoral processes is another factor that may enhance citizens' capacities to participate actively in civic and electoral activities. Rosenstone and Wolfinger (1978) adopt a cross-sectional empirical method, utilizing survey data as well as information about

each state's voting laws, using state as unit of analysis, they find that if every state made their laws easier for people to register, vote turnout would increase about 9.1 percent in the presidential election. Using panel method, analyzing data at county-level (61 counties in New York and 88 counties in Ohio), Ansolabehere and Konisky (2006), in contrast, indicate that turnout higher 9.1 percent as Rosenstone and Wolfinger found is overestimated. They argue that missing the target to increase vote turnout through electoral reform by changing registration requirements easier reflect biases in previous statistical estimates of the effects of registration on turnout, rather than failures of the laws. Registration reform would succeed, if the reformists set the goal to increase vote turnout only 3-5 percent.

However, reducing the barriers of registration to vote for others such as Adam J. Berinsky (2005) is ineffective to motivate more people to participate in the election, especially for those who have low level of interest in politics. Learning from a number of studies of electoral practices, Berinsky suggests that instead of providing easier process of vote registration, ensuring voters to cast their ballots more convenience in time (through early voting), place (by allow absentee vote), and procedure (via vote by internet or vote by mail) is the better way to increase voter turnouts.

3. Cultural Factors

In addition to individual and institutional factors, recent research have paid more attention to cultural factors such as social capital, connections among individual — social networks and norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them, and public culture, a sense of civic obligation (or duty). By cultural factors I mean, as Macedo et al. (2005: 49) defined, "those institutional and policy structures that provide part of the

context which citizens live and decision.” These factors help to compose a citizen’s environment and affect individuals’ policy choices in several aspects.

3.1 Social Capital

Many social capital studies indicate the impact of trust and participation in the voluntary sector on political engagement. For example, Arthur H. Miller, Edie Goldenberg, and Lutz Erbring (1979) argue that distrust of government in combination with political efficacy appears to boost voter turnout. Robert D. Putnam (2000) and Theda Skocpol (2003) emphasize the importance of participation in the voluntary organizations in stimulating civic activism.

In his *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Putnam (2000) examines the possible explanations for civic-disengagement trends and claims the effects of pressures of time and money, mobility and sprawl, changes in technology and mass media, and generational change as core explanatory factors. He claims that Americans, because of economic pressure, have lost their free-time to invest in community activities, while the movement of women out of the home into the paid labor force leads the sharpest decline in women’s civic participation. Moreover, suburbanization, commuting, and sprawl also play a supporting role: more time spent alone in the car means less time for friends and neighbor, for meetings, for community projects, and so on. In addition to those changes in social environment, Americans at the end of the twentieth century were watching more TV, watching it more habitually, more pervasively, and more often alone. And most important (for Putnam), much of the decline of civic engagement in America during the last third of the twentieth century is attributable to the replacement of an unusually civic generation by several generations (their children and grandchildren) that are less embedded in community life.

Putnam thus suggests the positive effects of social capital: better education and child welfare, safer and better off neighborhoods, economic prosperity, physical and psychological health and happiness, and democratic values and equality, and launches what he calls a “great crusade” to turn back the trend of social and political alienation by getting American citizens to join groups again as well as to join the familiar voluntary and community groups. He argues that experience in the participatory decision making of social club or volunteer organization develops skills and orientations that carry over to the world of politics.

3.2 Public Culture

In addition to social capital variables, a sense of obligation is the most commonly cited reason that political participants give for their engagement (Verba, Scholzman, and Brady, 1995). A sense of obligation is partly a result of mobilization (Rosenstone and Hanson, 2002). Mobilization promotes political participation by allowing political leaders to exploit citizens’ ongoing obligations to friends, neighbors, and social groups. Citizens feel an obligation to help people they like, people they identify with, people who are like them, and people who have helped them in the past. Likewise, citizens are more likely to contribute when they know that the people who expect them to help can tell whether or not they have done so. In this respect, participation in nonpolitical group also stimulates political involvement.

In Lieu of a Conclusion

Although the literature has been growing and diversifying during the last decades, there are still many areas which require considerable attention. As this paper discussed earlier, the conceptualization of political participation has developed from a very narrow sense of electoral participation (e.g. voting and participating

in campaign activities) to a broader view that includes several forms of non-electoral participation such as writing letters to the editor, contacting public officials, and working with others to solve community problems. Several studies also incorporate unconventional participation — protests, demonstrations, political violence, and access politics through new technologies such as mobile phone and the Internet — into their inquiry. Moreover, there are numerous factors that scholars have used to explain how and why people get (or don't get) involved in politics. These factors include: (1) *personal factors* such as political knowledge, political interest, partisanship, socioeconomic status, and group-based inequalities in participation; (2) *structural factors* such as the media environment, political campaigns, political competition, political mobilization, and obstacles to enfranchisement; and (3) *cultural factors* such as social capital and public culture.

Recent studies on political participation also have paid less attention to the psychological capacities and qualities inherent in individual citizens derived from socialization processes in early childhood, although these factors remain important and continue to be included in standard accounts of participation (Norris, 2007). Rather, the emphasis has become more the contextual factors found within particular communities, states, or elections which trigger or depress these propensities (see e.g. Burbank, 1997; Kim, Wyatt, and Katz, 1999; Putnam, 2000). These shifts in emphasis broaden our views on public participation by encouraging students in this field to think about it not only in terms of individual (or collective) behaviors but also in terms of institutional and cultural impacts.

According to these developments in the participation field, even though political behavioral scholars apparently have adequate knowledge about public participation, there are some rooms, in my opinion,

to think and rethink about what should be done to make the field progress. As many recent scholars (e.g. Macedo et al., 2005, Kaase, 2007, and Norris, 2007) correspondingly mention, the contemporary body of scholarship is more strength in explaining the causes than the consequences of participation. That is, for almost half a century, political behavioral scholars have paid more attention to explain why people get (or don't get) involved in politics, while some important questions remain and have few answers. For example, what do the changes in patterns of citizens' participation imply for the development of individual capacities, for strengthening communities, and for the quality of mass participation? What do these changes mean for process of governance, public policy agenda, and the most important, the consolidation and quality of democracy? Moreover, in order to make a better understanding about public participation, contemporary and future research in the political participation field should focus more intensively in these theoretical and analytical questions.

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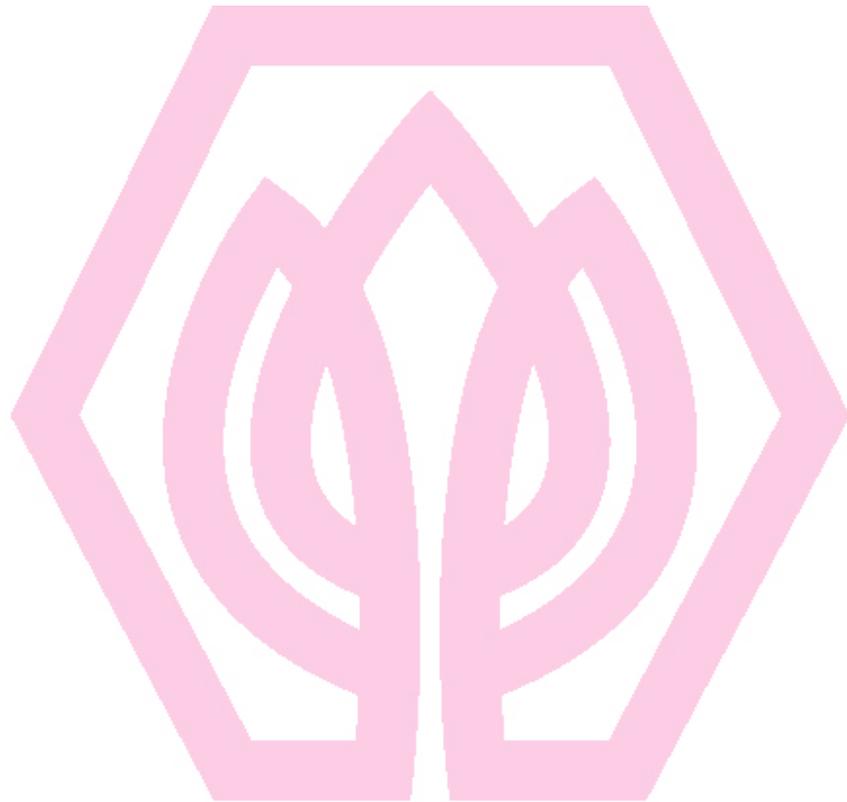
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